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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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MORRIS K. JESUP

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TRIBUTE OF THE

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

TO THE MEMORY OF

MORRIS K. JESUP.

PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER 1899 TO 1907

JANUARY 23. 1908

186571

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Tribute.

Morris K. Jesup, for eight years—1899–1907, President of the Chamber of Commerce, died January twenty-second, nineteen hundred and eight. To perpetuate the memory of his character and of his valuable services to the Chamber a special meeting was held on January twenty-third. The attendance was very large and included the most prominent representatives of the business community.

Mr. J. Edward Simmons, President of the Chamber, presided, and in announcing the object of the meeting, said:

Gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce: The very melancholy duty devolves upon me of announcing to you the death of my highly esteemed predecessor, Mr. Morris K. Jesup, who for eight consecutive years was the presiding officer of this Chamber. Mr. Jesup died yesterday morning at his house in this City; after

a somewhat prolonged and painful illness. By his death New York has lost one of its most distinguished and philanthropic citizens, and there are many institutions, benevolent, charitable and financial, that will miss him as a counsellor and a friend.

Mr. JESUP achieved success early in life. He was the architect of his own fortune, and for many years he has been identified with some of the most important and influential corporations of this country. He was a public spirited citizen, deeply interested in the furtherance of science and social betterment, and gave freely of his time and his money to religious, charitable, benevolent and educational institutions, as evidenced by his labors in behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association, the American Tract Society, the Children's Aid Society, the Half Orphan Asylum, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Woman's Hospital, and the Society for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. Mr. JESUP'S liberality to Princeton College will long be held in grateful appreciation; and the beautiful building he gave to Williams College, as well as the one he donated to the Union Theological Seminary, will cause his memory to be kept green at these seats of learning for many years to come. To enu-

merate all the institutions to which Mr. JESUP ungrudgingly gave his time, his counsel and his money would be to compile a directory of benevolent and public works for the past quarter of a century. As President of the American Museum of Natural History Mr. JESUP for upwards of twenty years has been a generous contributor to scientific research. He organized expeditions of exploration to many parts of the world, which brought invaluable additions to its ethnological and geological collections He was unremitting in his work for the improvement and enlargement of the institution and there was no department of it that did not benefit by his liberality. Under his watchful eye and guidance the Museum has reached a position of excellence that has attracted to it the attention of the scientific men of the world.

As President of the Chamber of Commerce Mr. JESUP rendered most efficient service, and at all times he gave to its responsible duties the same devoted attention that he bestowed upon every public-spirited enterprise with which he allied himself. He was a liberal giver to its relief fund and its charities, and it is generally admitted that to his generosity and individual efforts we are largely indebted for the construction of this our

monumental building. The land was purchased, the corner-stone was laid and the building was dedicated and occupied during his administration.

Personal relation with him was made agreeable by an ability that commanded respect, by a manner never failing in courtesy, by a fineness of feeling and a gentleness of temperament that inspired confidence and elicited admiration. He died in the fullness of years, at a time when his best work was accomplished and when the respect in which he was held in this community was at its culmination.

Among the names, fast lessening in number, that shine on the roll of membership of this Chamber as links connecting its present state of prosperity with the traditions of its past usefulness, none is brighter or worthier than that of MORRIS K. JESUP. The secret of the esteem in which he was held is found in the rare quality which made the essence of his character and gave value and distinction to his whole life—the quality of fidelity. Faithful in all things, great and small; faithful to conviction, faithful to duty, faithful to friendship, an example of principle and probity of the older fashion, in a degenerate time, his life is a lesson and its close is a public loss.

Speech of the Honorable George F. Seward.

There are occasions, Mr. President, when it is well to turn away from affairs. Such an occasion has brought us together to-day.

Our late President came and went in this Chamber for more than forty years. There was no service that he was called upon to render that he refused. He presided over our body eight years. He gave of his strength and he gave of his means. All of his service exhibited the character of the man. He was modest. He was dignified. He was capable. He was earnest. He was conservative. He was sympathetic. He was true to principle. As the years passed and his strength declined he held to his duty, not because of any vanity, but because there was reason why he could not be spared.

If we should count to Mr. JESUP'S honor his current work in the Chamber only, his name would be cherished by us not least among the notable men who have served

and honored it. It is a galaxy of names that we do not need to repeat lest we forget. Our Chamber would have been something less without these men. Our City would have been something less without them.

But Mr. JESUP's service was not limited to the current work of this Chamber. One may not recite all the causes which enlisted his support. No one may believe that he knows them all. He was one who sought to conceal rather than to proclaim. A recital of some of the activities of which we have knowledge will suffice to illustrate the breadth of his sympathies and the range of his labors and benefactions.

It was during Mr. JESUP's Presidency of eight years that this beautiful hall was completed. We associate this building with him as if it were a temple raised to perpetuate his memory.

For an equal number of years he was a member of the Rapid Transit Board, finding time to give to it the benefit of his large experience and co-operating in all ways heartily with that earlier President of ours to whose resourcefulness, constancy and courage our people are so largely indebted for the success of the enterprise.

For eight years he directed the affairs of the Sailors' Snug Harbor, with its thirty millions of assets. During that time it passed through a period calling for the care of an accomplished man of business and financier. That he gave without stint.

For a generation he was indentified with the American Museum of Natural History. It might almost be said that the Museum was his creation and that his gifts to it broadened its scope and made it the great institution of which our citizens are so proud.

He was the founder and president of the Arctic Club. His contributions made the last voyage of PEARY possible. The intrepid explorer in grateful appreciation placed the name JESUP on the map of the far Northland.

As a coadjutor in the management of the Union Theological Seminary and a contributor to its needs, MR. JESUP placed under obligations, not only the foundation he served but all defenders of the faith who believe that theology may be taught best when liberty of belief and institutional freedom are alike unfettered.

Education was the beneficiary of his labors. He was

a Trustee of the Peabody Educational Board, of the General Educational Board, and of the JOHN F. SLATER Fund for the Education of Freedmen. These foundations, broadly devised and broadly administered, controlling millions of money, all received from him the earnest, capable and conscientious care which characterized all his work.

Could any one name among the people of our great City or among all the people of our land another person in private life whose activities were wider? Could any one believe that he would be called to such trusts unless there was that in the man which made his counsels valuable in an unusual degree?

To those of us who love this City where he labored, and who believe there is something in its activities that develops the broadest sympathies as well as the broadest abilities of the strong men who mingle in its affairs, it is a delight to linger upon memories of Mr. JESUP and to indulge the belief that he was typical of the best development of our metropolitan life.

It is a happy circumstance that the men who are most appreciated in any community and those whose mem-

ories are cherished with affectionate regard are not financial magnates who have striven mainly for personal success, not the men who have achieved distinction within special lines, but those whose labors, however successful in other ways, have illustrated broad devotion to humanity and to all good causes. Such a man was MORRIS K. JESUP.

And it is a happy circumstance that the repute of any community is established in other communities, not by its general level of merit but by the character of its more distinguished citizens. Their qualities are reflected upon and their merits attributed to their comrades and their community. In all the world where men are lovers of their kind our City is the greater because Mr. JESUP, and others of his kind, have lived here and exhibited solicitude for the welfare of men and given practical evidence of that devotion to the highest causes.

It remains to say but a word. It is only a few months since Mr. JESUP laid aside his work here. We of the Chamber knew then that the life that had lasted so long was nearing its end. We knew as he spoke that he was conscious that in so much of life as might be

left for him he could never hope to mingle again with the men whom he loved and who loved him. There were eyes that day that were dim with moisture. There are eyes to-day that are dim with moisture. For there is such a thing among men as affection, and Mr. JESUP gave and received affection in large measure.

I offer these resolutions for the consideration of the Chamber.

That in testimony of respect and affection the members of the Chamber attend in a body the funeral of our late President.

That the proceedings of this special meeting be printed and a copy sent to Mrs. JESUP by the President with words of sympathy.

Speech of the Honorable Joseph H. Choate.

Mr. President and Fellow Members: It is with the deepest feeling that I come before you to-day to second the resolutions that have been offered by Mr. Seward. It was with no sudden shock that we received the tidings of the death of our beloved Ex-President, Mr. Jesup. Those of us who were near to him had witnessed his long sufferings and the fortitude, the patience and serenity with which he bore them, and it was rather with a sense of relief that we heard at last that his sufferings were ended and that he had gone to his eternal rest.

I shall not trespass upon your time to attempt to enumerate the great acts of his life, the wonderful works in education and charity in which he engaged. Those have already been related to you. But I do wish to speak of what seemed to me the effect that his wonderful generosity, the demands that were made upon it, the freedom with which he indulged it,

had upon his own mind and heart. It seemed to me that the more he gave, the more subjects of human interest to which he lent a helping hand, the more his heart expanded, his nature enlarged, and his range of thought grew constantly broader and broader.

His charities cannot be measured by any list. I do not suppose that there is any man living who can enumerate all the subjects which he enriched by his benevolence. He seemed to know no distinction of race or religion or color, but was equally interested in lending a helping hand to the freedmen of the South; to the objects of the care of Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes; to suffering people whom our foreign missions reach; to the degraded inhabitants of the lower regions of our own great City and of many other great cities—all these alike came equally within the range of his bounty. But his personality grew as his sympathies widened and broadened, and he was much greater, much more effective, much more far-reaching in these works of benevolence and charity from year to year, and from decade to decade; and so it was that his mind evidently expanded and broadened, taking in ever a wider and broader range as he devoted himself to these other subjects of education and of science to which allusion has

already been made. In other words, his heart and mind and personality all grew larger and stronger by what they fed on.

I suppose I may speak with authority of his services to the world in the Museum of Natural History; for it was not merely to that corporation, it was not merely to the citizens of New York who enjoy the benefit of what he has given and done there, but to the world at large, that the benefits of his labors in that direction extended. I say I may speak with authority because I believe that Mr. MORGAN and I are the only surviving associates who, with him, assisted in the organization of that institution. I do not think it can be said that Mr. JESUP was the creator of the Museum. I should hardly venture in the presence of Mr. MORGAN to claim for him a monopoly of the generosity that endowed that institution from the beginning; nor would I forget the abundant aid of many other generous benefactors; but I will say that he was the chief factor, the most powerful and effective agent in bringing it to the great eminence that it enjoys to-day. I do not know that you really appreciate the scientific standing which it has reached among similar institutions in the world. In fact I believe it has now no superior, and in many branches of its service it is without an equal. I

have told you how his heart warmed and his views expanded as he devoted himself to these subjects. It was very remarkable to see how a successful business man could detach his mind from commerce and finance, and devote it to subjects to which he had theretofore been wholly a stranger. He never claimed to be a scientific man, but he knew where the scientific men were to be found, and he became deeply interested in the enterprises to which he gave his aid. Let me show you how his expansion manifested itself in one direction. He had put his shoulder to the wheel in the early days of the Museum when it was a struggle to keep it on foot, and there had long been a pressure brought to bear upon the Board of Trustees for the opening of the Museum on Sundays, to which he was most rigidly and strongly opposed. He studied the subject, however, and took it into deep consideration. His sympathies had broadened. He looked to see how best the people of New York could be benefited by it, and finally he became convinced, and not only gave his willing consent, but his hearty advocacy, to the opening of the Museum on Sunday for the benefit of the people of New York, and he has often told me since that really it was one of the very best things that the Museum had ever done.

Reference has been made to what he did for education. It was suggested to me in reading one of the morning papers, what a magnificent thing he has been doing in the Far East, for the Turkish Empire I might say, by his most cordial generosity to the University at Beirut. Those of you who have been in Cairo have probably visited the University of Cairo, and have seen the Musselmen at the University; ten thousand students gathered from all parts of Egypt and many other regions in Turkey—gathered for the mere purpose of studying enough to learn to recite a few verses of the Koran, and that is the whole extent of their curriculum. Now, at the University of Beirut, if you go there, you will find a university on a par with the great universities of America, gathering from all parts of the Turkish Empire students to learn the languages, and to study the classics, and history and political economy, and sent away to their distant homes, each to be a centre of light to the community to which he returns.

I remember—speaking now of the Chamber of Commerce—the visit that he and the representatives of this Chamber, a picked company of its members, made to London five or six years ago, and what a deep impres-

sion he and his companions made there, not only upon the merchants of London, but upon the whole community, and upon the Sovereign who received them with great pleasure, when they had the honor of being presented to him at Windsor, and the delegation, and he, by his charming presence and dignified bearing, left upon the English people, and an appreciation of what American merchants are that they had never had before; and I heard it often expressed that if those were the men who had charge of American commerce, there was no room to wonder at its wonderful expansion and success.

Here is the place, gentlemen, where his memory ought to be first commemorated. It was here to the development of this Chamber that he devoted so much of his time and energy. This noble building, as it has been well said, is a glorious monument to him. And so the Museum of Natural History will be for all coming time another and a still more glorious monument. What he did there for us is only on a broader scale than what he did here. He gave immense sums of money, but, what was far better than that, he gave his heart with it, and for twenty-five years he devoted the best energies of his life to the building up of that great

institution. When he came here a few weeks ago to perform his last official duty, it was his unerring conscience and his overruling sense of duty that brought him here, though it might cost him his life ; and a few days after that, he came to the Museum of Natural History for a similar service, and it seemed almost impossible, so exhausted was he, that he could reach home alive. But, as your President has said, it was the everlasting sense of duty that accompanied him down to his latest breath, and his overruling conscience in every matter which came to his hands, that made him the man he was.

Speech of General Horace Porter.

Mr. President: In rising to second these very appropriately expressed resolutions, I can safely say that this is the saddest occasion on which I was ever called upon to meet my fellow-members of the Chamber of Commerce. It is a moment when it would seem that the lips should be silent and the heart alone should speak. Morris K. Jesup is no more. The sad news filled each heart here with a sense of grief akin to the sorrow of a personal bereavement. The familiar, genial face that we were always so glad to look upon in social life, in business affairs, in public matters, we shall see no more forever. He has been called from the living here to join that other living, commonly called the dead. But yesterday the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl was broken, and one of the noblest spirits that ever wore the mantle of mortality has winged its flight back to the God who gave it. One of the most precious memories of my entire life will always be the fact that it was my privilege to know Morris Jesup closely, intimately for a period of over forty years. He came here from a

neighboring State to enter the lists of competition with other young men who had determined to win their fortunes and their fame in the great metropolis. I can almost see him now as he appeared then in the full vigor of young manhood; his deep, piercing eyes, his jet black hair and beard, his brisk step, his cordial manner. There was something in the manliness and frankness of his look that inspired confidence in all who came into relation with him.

Morris Jesup, it seems to me, was unique in one particular. He was a man who steadily, gradually and surely advanced. There are many men in life who make a spurt and then stop. Many go no further; some even retrograde. Morris Jesup was continually advancing in his career. I do not think there was a single year in which he had not reached a point somewhat in advance of the point that he occupied the year before. He was constantly learning something. It used to astonish us all to see the progress he made in so many different and useful directions. He had no ambition to enter the rough and tumble of political life, and spend his time within the realms of conventions, and parliaments, and yet, every year we saw him, who had devoted his early life entirely to

mercantile pursuits, expressing himself in writing more forcefully and in his addresses more eloquently, until he became one of the most agreeable and graceful presiding officers over public bodies that New York has seen for many years. I will not pause to recount the many monuments he builded, they have been described to you just now so fully and so eloquently by my predecessors. I can say from personal knowledge, however, having visited all similar institutions of note, that he lived to see in the Museum of Natural History a creation which far surpasses any institution of its kind in the world to-day. He began later in life to study art and science, when he became a patron of those branches. In connection with the Museum of Natural History and other institutions he studied science, not in a technical way, but with that broad view which was easy to grasp, with his quick perceptions. Then he studied the world's geography when he was contemplating how to assist a great explorer in reaching the coveted possession of the Pole; and as has been said, he lived to see his name attached to a point of land nearest to that much sought object.

We know within the walls of this building more about his charity and his benevolence than is known

elsewhere, for no man was more modest in that respect, no one took greater pains to disguise the amount of his charities, dispensed with his spirit of broad philanthropy. We all know that wherever a calamity was heard of, in this country or any other country, whether it arose from fire, or flood, or famine or earthquake, with his great powers of administration and his sympathetic heart, he was first in the field with ready, prompt and practical means of relief. As a banker he was well known to this City. Through his connection with powerful organizations and corporations he was well known throughout the country. His practical philanthropy, far-reaching views, correspondence and dealings made him known to all countries. Foreign nations decorated him, and the Sovereign of a distant power knighted him. But what he loved and appreciated much more than all such honors was the possession of the profound respect and absolute affection of his fellow-citizens. He reached a ripe age. He died with his harness on. He had completed all his life's work. He died at peace with his fellow man and at peace with his God. He passed away surrounded by his affectionate and devoted wife, who had been his true partner in all his labors, his triumphs and his joys, and by other relations whom he loved. It will now be our

duty to lay him in the tomb, shut out from the light of summer suns, there to await the requiem of winter's storms, but his true sepulchre will be the hearts of his fellow-citizens. He was a lesson to his contemporaries; he will be an inspiration to his successors. He gained title deeds to honors of which he can never be dispossessed. He made his name honorable in this age and venerable to posterity. The many monuments he created will always speak in their mute eloquence of his worth. We can now only gather together and recount his virtues, commend his example to others, breathe a peace to his ashes, and say with SHAKESPEARE'S character: "Good-night, sweet Prince."

Speech of the Honorable John Bigelow.

Mr. President: I am rather surprised to be asked to take part in the commemoration of this event which we are all mourning, as I have not the honor of being a member, except by your kindness, an honorary member of the Chamber; but on being named I cannot forbear from chiming in with what has been so eloquently and so appropriately stated in regard to the departed member of the Chamber. I had only relations with his, what may be called his public life, and I did not know him when he was more active as a business man, and I do not know that it would even become me to attempt to say anything more upon those subjects than you have already heard from other speakers. He must be remembered for his usefulness, for his sympathy with every cause that appeals to the heart and the sensibilities of his kind. He must be remembered as a man who, through a tolerably long life, endeavored to walk humbly with God. He must be remembered as a man who shared in a most bountiful degree the blessings of Providence, and he accepted them as a trust and nothing else—an example which we should all of us do our best to imitate.

Speech of the Honorable Seth Low.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce: In the death of Mr. Jesup the Chamber and the City have lost a man who constantly gave new significance to membership in this Chamber and to citizenship in this City. In both capacities he illustrated anew the old saying, that "he that loseth his life, the same shall save it." Year after year he spent himself, and was spent in the service of this community; and year by year the community claimed him more and more for its own. To-day, as we meet to honor his memory, we know that he lives, and will live, not only in the annals of this Chamber and in the history of the City of New York but also in the hearts of his survivors. This building is only one of many monuments of his Presidency of the Chamber; and the American Museum of Natural History is only the greatest of his monuments in the City. In both instances the result is due to the imagination in him, that quality which the poet says, "gives to airy nothing, a local habitation and a name." A man of constructive intellect, whether he pursues a business career or any other, must have

imagination. That which such a man lives to see he must first foresee. So, Mr. JESUP foresaw with the clearness of actual vision, the added dignity and influence which would accrue to this ancient Body by having its own home; and so he foresaw at a time when it seemed as if even to hope for it was an extravagance, the possibilities of a great Museum of Natural History in the City of New York. And so to day, we of the Chamber of Commerce and we of the City of New York are enjoying the realization of the visions that inspired him. It is true that to the visualizing of these day-dreams, he gave unstintedly of his own time and of his own means. But that only signifies that to him his visions were real, and that he knew that they were worth while.

But greatly as Mr. JESUP has served New York, this again has been only a part of his service to our country. Becoming the Treasurer of the SLATER fund in 1882, at the time of its foundation, a fund established by his friend, the late JOHN F. SLATER, of Norwich, Conn., for the benefit of the negroes, Mr. JESUP so ably managed the fund of $1,000,000, that to-day it amounts to more than $1,600,000, after paying out, year after year, its full income for the purposes of the endowment. It

has been largely due to his influence that the movement for the industrial and agricultural education of the negroes has received so great an impetus. He has been a Trustee of the PEABODY Fund from the beginning, and also a member of the General Education Board. In other words, he has been a vital part of the movement that has done so much in recent years to develop the hidden resources of the South in human power, both white and black, that means for our country more than all the South's wealth in iron and in coal.

Time would fail me to tell of his services to science and to exploration, but this, at least, must be said. The same quality of imagination of which I have spoken led him to give generously for many such purposes, because he was able to see the value of expeditions and researches that to many would have seemed as unrewarding as a dream. For this faith men of science will long remember him as a benefactor; and his name is forever associated with definite contributions to human knowledge.

But what shall I say of Mr. JESUP as a man? Certainly he was one of our foremost citizens. But he was more than that. He was a man who illustrated in every

relation of a long and highly useful life the finest traits of character that we, of the Chamber of Commerce, at least, like to believe are characteristic of the ideal man of business. Upright; with an integrity that we sometimes speak of as old-fashioned, but which in fact was neither old nor new; it was simply the real thing, as old as eternity and as young as the light of to-day. Well-balanced; ready to dare, yet knowing when to stop. The master of his business and not its slave. The master of his money and of himself. An earnest Christian, patriotic, public-spirited, generous, courteous; a good neighbor, a kind friend. A much older man than I, I have watched his life expand during these last twenty years, as if every year his sympathies became broader, his outlook wider, his sense of the opportunities of service at once more commanding and more winning. Like the flower of the century plant, his life has come to an end simply because it had reached its perfect bloom. We cannot but mourn that the flower no longer blooms. But we thank God that it was given to us to see it in all its beauty.

Speech of Mr. A. Foster Higgins.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Chamber: I have been named to utter a few words here to-day because I was known as an old friend of Mr. Jesup's. I can add nothing to the eulogisms which have been pronounced upon Mr. Jesup's character as a man and a merchant, but I can add a few words of my private knowledge of him as a friend. For sixty years he and myself have been intimate friends. I never looked at him but his eyes softened and there instantly proceeded from his face a welcome to me, his hand was outstretched and I felt that I grasped the hand of a friend. Gentlemen, this may seem trifling, but in my opinion it is one of the greatest gifts God has given us on earth. I feel that Mr. Jesup in his grand character, his rounded nature, and in all the examples he has set us, was a glorious character. We can feel proud of him. I know the secret of his life. It was that he trusted in God, and God made him a noble example of a man and what a man is capable of. Every one of us, in looking at the picture which has been drawn to-day of him, should emulate him, should feel an earnest

desire to become like him. VAN DYKE, in his beautiful lines narrating the Path of Peace, states, "We should prize life because it gives us a chance to love and work." Mr. JESUP exhibited in the highest degree that he availed himself of that chance; and that chance should be availed of by us. The animosities of life, the jealousies, the horrible exhibitions which we have seen in late years should make us look for something higher, something better. It is to be found in trust in God and and in no other way. And I feel that this Chamber is the place from which should emanate the examples to be set to other people. Our children should be brought up to regard uprightness, honor and integrity as the highest acquisitions of the human race. Mr. JESUP's grand deeds have been spoken of to you in brief. They will all be narrated and registered in history. But I feel that of all the things we can say of him we can say, "Blessed be the man who trusteth in God. He has gone to his rest and his works will follow him."

THE PRESIDENT.—Are there any further remarks? The question is upon the adoption of the resolutions. Those who are in favor will say aye: those opposed, no.

The resolutions are unanimously adopted.